

Parkdale Book Club

February 2026 – The Women

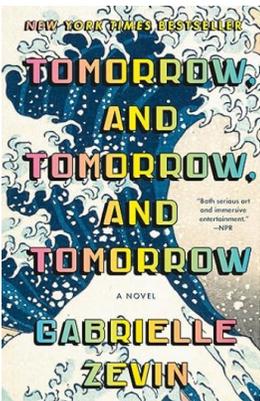
Schedule – 2nd Saturday each month, 10 am, Zoom

2026

March 14	<i>Tomorrow, and Tomorrow...</i>	Gabrielle Zevin	Lindsay
April 11	<i>In Winter I Get Up at Night</i>	Jane Urquhart	Lynn
May 9	<i>Prairie Edge</i>	Conor Kerr	Beth
June 13	<i>The Bookbinder</i>	Pip Williams	Debbie

Our book club has a Facebook page. See <https://www.facebook.com/ParkdaleBookClub>

Coming Up ...



Our next meeting is **Saturday, March 14th** at 10:00 am when we will discuss Lindsay's nomination, *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow* by Gabrielle Zevin.

From Amazon: "On a bitter cold day, in the December of his Junior Year at Harvard, Sam Masur exits

a subway car and sees, amid the hordes of people waiting on the platform, Sadie Green. He calls her name. For a moment, she pretends she hasn't heard him, but then, she turns, and a game begins: a legendary collaboration that will launch them to stardom. They borrow money, beg favors, and, before even graduating college, they have created their first blockbuster, *Ichigo*: a game where players can escape the confines of a body and the betrayals of a heart, and where death means nothing more than a chance to restart and play again. This is the story of the perfect worlds Sam and Sadie build, the imperfect world they live in, and of everything that comes after success: Money. Fame. Duplicity. Tragedy.

Spanning over thirty years, from Cambridge, Massachusetts, to Venice Beach, California, and lands in between and far beyond, Gabrielle Zevin's *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow* is a dazzling and intricately imagined novel that examines the multifarious nature of identity, games as artform, technology and the human experience, disability, failure, the redemptive possibilities in play, and above all, our need to connect: to be loved and to love. Yes, it is a love story, but it is not one you have read before." And Lindsay says you don't have to be into gaming to enjoy the book. ❖

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82432011683?pwd=SEgwSFFIOTRZODVtSmVuYWV1vOXNwdz09>

Meeting ID: 824 3201 1683

Passcode: 284356

February's discussion, *The Women*

Nine of us gathered on Saturday to discuss Kristin Hannah's *The Women*. Some of our thoughts:

This book had a similar feel to *The Nightingale*, another book by Kristin Hannah. I'm curious about the author's interest in wartime stories. I don't recall reading a novel about the Viet Nam war before. It was interesting to read, partly because I was a similar age to

the characters in the book during this period of time. I particularly remember the My Lai massacre and the conviction of William Calley.

I found it educational to read. I think of the Viet Nam war as being in the 60s but I don't remember that it dragged on as long as it did. What a futile and disastrous endeavor it was. The book exposed how the US under-reported their own casualties and misrepresented the situation to garner public support for continued participation in the war. It is a reminder that we must be discerning about what we read and check out sources and the author's agenda.

The book did a good job of showing the casualties of the war – the 58,000+ who died and the horrific impact on those who barely survived. Frankie succumbed to addictions to alcohol and drugs, like many others. It must have been awful for the returning servicemen and women to be scorned and rejected, after all they had been through. Soldiers returning from earlier wars were welcomed home with ticker tape parades. Soldiers returning from Vietnam were spit on and yelled at. In addition, they didn't get help to recover from their physical and psychological wounds. No wonder they turned to drugs and alcohol to cope.

I was shocked at how difficult it was for Frankie to get help on her return to the US because she was a woman. She made two attempts to get help at a VA hospital for her addictions and PTSD and she was told that their services were only for vets and that didn't include her because "there were no women in Vietnam." How dismissive it must have felt to hear people say she didn't qualify as a vet because she wasn't doing active service! She was in the military and she served in the war saving lots of people but that didn't count.

Frankie's relationship with fellow nurses Barb and Evelyn saved her on many occasions. They were the only ones who really understood her experience. I liked the relationship they had with each other.

I had mixed feelings about *The Women*. On one hand, the author does a good job of presenting important and neglected information about the Viet Nam war (called The American War in Viet Nam). I appreciated the exposure of the war machine's appetite for young men to use as cannon fodder; propaganda; and of course, sexism. I appreciated the bond of friendship/chosen family that developed between Frankie, Barb, and Ethel. "Thank God for girlfriends. In this

crazy, chaotic, divided world that was run by men, you could count on the women." I appreciated the exploration of the generational differences: "We were the last believers, my generation. We trusted what our parents taught us about right and wrong, good and evil, the American myth of equality and justice and honor. I wonder if any generation will ever believe again. People will say it was the war that shattered our lives and laid bare the beautiful lie we'd been taught. And they'd be right. And wrong. There was so much more. It's hard to see clearly when the world is angry and divided and you're being lied to." I appreciated the exposure of hypocrisy in all its presentations: "when she felt a rise in her blood pressure, a flood of grief or anger, she smiled tautly and left whatever room she was in. She'd learned that people noticed a raised voice; quiet was the perfect camouflage for pain." "If you don't want to be seen as a liar, maybe you shouldn't lie, Dad." I appreciated the ironies resulting in reading this book in the present geopolitical climate: "Civilians were being arrested for exercising the fundamental American right to protest their government." ...when protest is no longer a right that is safe in the U.S.

OTOH, at times I thought, this is a romance written by someone with M*A*S*H* on loop in the background. I was skeptical of the 'pretty privilege' of main character. At times I thought the title would more accurately be *Woman Making Bad Decisions*.

As I was bopping around to a playlist that developed out of someone on FB asking for suggestions of songs with positive vibes, I thought, hey, I wonder how long it would take to make a playlist of all the songs mentioned in *The Women*, followed immediately by, I'm sure someone has already done this. And sure enough, there are two on Spotify. Here's a link to one of them, a playlist that will appeal to women of a certain age:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/5Em3SzxZmNsJWM1ZPCVKIe?si=81028740e09b4355>

Books and film mentioned in our discussion of *The Women*

Home Again by Kristin Hannah. Madelaine Hillyard is a world-famous heart surgeon at the top of her

game. Her personal life is far less successful. She is constantly at odds with her teenage daughter. Complicating matters for Madelaine are the DeMarco brothers: Priest Francis is always ready to lend a helping hand but his brother, Angel, abandoned Madelaine. Years later, Angel reappears, seeking help as a patient.

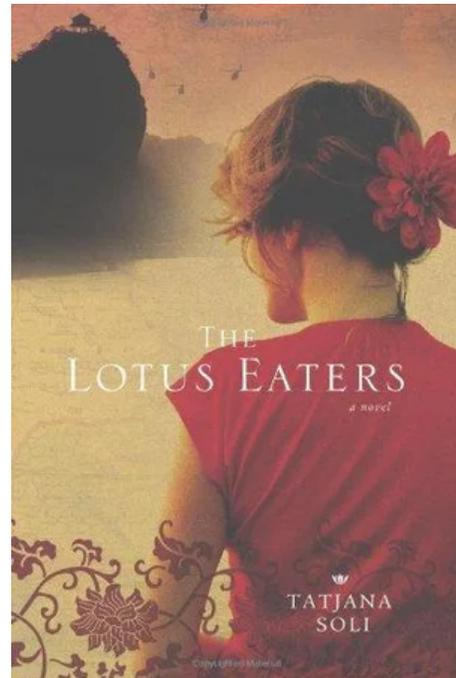
The Four Winds – Another book by Kristin Hannah. A powerful American epic about love and heroism and hope, set during the Great Depression, a time when the country was in crisis and at war with itself, when millions were out of work and even the land seemed to have turned against them.

The Pitt – A medical drama TV series on Crave. Each season follows emergency department staff as they attempt to overcome the hardships of a single 15-hour work shift at the fictional Pittsburgh Trauma Medical Center, all while having to navigate staff shortages and underfunding. Each episode covers one hour of the work shift. It's theorized that the appeal is the comfort in seeing people simply doing their jobs competently. Competency porn.

The Lotus Eaters (2010) by Tatjana Soli is a novel of some acclaim with similar themes and elements to those of Kristin Hannah's The Women. In addition, it examines our inability at times to look away, and the importance of bearing witness.

- Winner of UK's James Tait Black Prize
- New York Times Notable Book of 2010
- American Library Association 2011 Notable Book
- Finalist LA Times Book Award
- A Kirkus Reviews Top Debut Fiction of 2010
- Bookmarks Magazine Best Literary Fiction of 2010

In the final days of a falling Saigon, *The Lotus Eaters* unfolds the story of three remarkable photographers brought together under the impossible umbrella of war: Helen Adams, a once-naïve ingénue whose ambition conflicts with her desire over the course of the fighting; Linh, the mysterious Vietnamese man who loves her, but is torn between conflicting loyalties to his homeland and his heart; and Sam Darrow, a man addicted to the narcotic of violence, to his intoxicating affair with Helen and to the ever-increasing danger of his job. All three become transformed by the conflict they have risked everything to record. ❖



big book club

The **big book club** (formerly Literary Kaleidoscope) meets on the third Wednesday of each month from September to May. In-person meetings are held at the Marda Loop Community Hall, 3130-16 St SW, 10:00 to 11:30 am. Each month, a prominent guest speaker guides the discussion. \$10 at the door or register ahead. \$12 for livestream meetings. Here are the presenters and books for upcoming meetings:

Mar. 18 – (online) Hampton Sides presents ***The Wide Wide Sea*** by Hampton Sides.

Apr. 15 – (in person) Kerrie Penney presents ***Upstream*** by Mary Oliver.

Read more about the **big book club** and sign up for their newsletter to receive announcements of meetings. ❖

Remembering Past Members



We remember with gratitude two past members of our Book Club who have recently passed away – Ida Wyllie and Jean Tollefson.

Ida Wyllie, a retired librarian and wise soul, died on January 13, 2026 at the age of 95 years. Her Celebration of Life is at 2:00 pm on Saturday, March 7 at Parkdale United Church. Read [Ida's obituary](#). Ida earlier lost her close friend, Joyce, also a past member of book club who is fondly missed.

Jean Tollefson died on February 3, 2026 at the age of 104. Her Celebration of Life is at 2:00 pm on Thursday, February 19 at Parkdale United Church. Read [Jean's obituary](#).

Both Ida and Jean were avid readers and always had wise comments to offer about the books we read together. Ida was also a participant in the journaling group with Lynn and Lindsay. Ida and Jean were both activists in Project Ploughshares, working for peace and justice in the world. Both of these wonderful women have made significant contributions to making the world a better place and both will be sadly missed by friends and family. ❖

To make a prairie

To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee,
One clover, and a bee.

And revery.

The revery alone will do,
If bees are few.

Emily Dickinson (1779)

Lunch with Al and Margaret



Roz was thrilled when her dear friend, Al Oster, invited her to join him for lunch with Margaret Atwood in his home in December. What a treat for all of them. Roz commented, “The summary is she’s fabulous!” Margaret Atwood recently released her new book, [Book of Lives: A Memoir of Sorts](#).

Sadly, that was the last time that Roz saw Al; he passed away on January 23 at 95 yr. A very generous philanthropist, Al is described as “an extraordinary man whose radiant smile illuminated every room and brightened every day.” Read [Al's obituary](#). †

Also reading

Janine is immersed in **Playground** by Richard Powers, set largely on Makatea in French Polynesia. From Penguin Random House: When two brilliant misfits bond at an elite Chicago private school—one a white legacy kid named Todd Keane and the other, Rafi Young, a Black scholarship student from the South Side—their friendship seems as boundary-breaking and limitless as the 3,000-year-old board game that brings them together. For a time, not even simultaneously falling in love with Ina Aroita, who grew up in naval bases across the Pacific, shakes them. Until

finally it does, with a betrayal that launches all three of them on radically different paths.

Rafi disappears into literature, and Ina into art. Todd, who once dreamed of escape into the world beneath the surface of the ocean, revealed to him by the legendary Canadian diver and marine biologist Evie Beaulieu, becomes instead one of the most powerful tech billionaires on the planet, whose social media empire, Playground, is remaking the global order with its AI breakthroughs. But not even wild success can insulate Todd from mortality. As illness eats away at the brain that built it all, he dreams of the life that could've been and the relationships he should never have let go.

Before Todd's final act is up, past loves and present ambitions collide on the ravaged Polynesian island of Makatea, where an unnamed corporation hopes to build the first floating, autonomous city on the open sea. Traversing borders and oceans, connection and loss, ingenuity and transcendence, Playground brings to light the systems of competition, cooperation, commerce, exploration and love that tie the fates of unlikely humans together, in Richard Powers' most transporting work of fiction yet.

Friends of Dorothy, Sandi Toksvig. A bit too cute for me, which meant I took a week to get through it, which meant that there was time for the characters to grow on me. A bit like Dorothy, the previous owner who did not vacate the house that Amber & Stevie bought. Still, over all, 2* 16126

Rubbernecker, Belinda Bauer. Another one of those chance finds – I was putting a different one of Bauer's books on hold, and this one was available to borrow right now, so, okay, let's try it. Very good mystery featuring an anatomy student who is on the autism spectrum, and the experience of people who are in comas. Unfortunately the outdated term Asperger's is used in this book. This term is no longer used because a) the lack of differentiation between this category and autism spectrum, and b) the term Asperger's came from psychiatrist Hans Asperger who was complicit with the Nazis. Terminology aside, the character development was strong, both Patrick the MC who is on the spectrum, and the range of others' reactions to his neurodivergence. 4.5* 18126

Holmes, Margaret and Poe, James Patterson & Brian Sitts. Okay, gripes first. Why are the last names of the male characters used in the title, but the first name of the female character?? But then on Goodreads, the book is titled *Holmes, Marple and Poe*. What gives? Is it different in Canada vs. U.S.? Some research (more time invested in this book than it warrants, really) suggests that Christie's Miss Marple's name is still an

active trademark, so the title had to be changed, although the character's last name remains Marple in the text. The other thing that made my brain trip was the heterogeneity of the character origins. Marple and Holmes were detective characters created by Christie and Conan Doyle, but Poe was an author who wrote detective stories. The novel is moderately entertaining, although it reads like a script for a TV series (which I would probably watch). My fav characters are Margaret Marple and Virginia, their office manager. Overall, though, 2*. 22126

Blue Heaven, CJ Box. A stand-alone from CJ Box (who writes the Joe Pickett series). One of the guidelines for good writing is show, don't tell, and the beginning of this book could be an example of why that's a good rule; in the early pages there is a lot of just telling. But Box does good characterization (male characters fare better than the women), and the book is enjoyable. Blue Heaven is the nickname for a small town in Idaho where many LAPD officers retire. So I get to learn about life in Idaho, and add to my apprehension about law 'enforcement,' already in the red zone because of news stories about ICE. Have some Kleenex ready for the end. 4* 24126

Staring at the Sun: Overcoming the Terror of Death, Irvin Yalom. Further in the thanatology reading. I have had this book on my shelf (my various shelves) since 2009, and finally... This was so good that, although I'm very unlikely to read it again, I'm reluctant to get rid of it now that I'm finished. "Rollo May quipped that anxiety about nothing tries to become anxiety about something. In other words, anxiety about nothingness quickly attaches itself to a tangible object." "I believe that our need for mentors reflects much about our vulnerability and wish for a superior or supreme being. Many people, including myself, not only cherish our mentors but often credit them with more than they deserve." "would you be willing to live this past year again and again for all eternity?" "Schopenhauer argues elegantly that the accumulation of wealth and goods is endless and unsatisfying; the more we possess, the more our claims multiply. Wealth is like seawater: the more we drink, the thirstier we become." "When we are tired, we are attacked by ideas we conquered long ago." "Sooner or later you have to give up hope for a better past." Interestingly, one edition advertised on Amazon has the subtitle as *Being at Peace with Your Own Mortality*, even though Yalom spoke to his choice of "Terror" for the subtitle. This retitling illustrates Yalom's premise of our strong motivation to avoid looking directly at death. One of the few things I took issue with is Yalom's question, "What most frightens you about death?" I think questions that invite us to choose the winner can be problematic. I think 'What are the top 100 things that frighten you about death?' has more potential. Okay, maybe top 20, or even 10. 5* 25126

The Good Daughter, Karin Slaughter, read by Kathleen Early. The Karin Slaughter/ Kathleen Early collaboration is unbeatable. My advice: Do not use this audiobook for falling back to sleep when you wake up in the night. I restarted the 20-minute timer at least 6 times one night. Intense, very dark, good writing, the usual good character-building. It is disconcerting when the story seems to start over again, same excruciating events being recounted from the perspective of the other sister, but the repetition includes some clues, and is brief. "I love you, I know that you love me, but every time we see each other, we see what happened, and neither one of us will ever move forward if we are always looking back." "I've got to figure out before I die whether I want to be happy or I want to be right." 5* 26126

DNF *The Last Patient of the Night*, Gary Gerlach. First 15 minutes felt mostly like, look at me, aren't I wonderful? Ugh. Nope. The blurb says M*A*S*H* meets Harry Bosch, but I saw no evidence of that.

DNF *Eruption*, Michael Crichton, James Patterson. Interesting to learn that homo habilis was walking around before the Hawaiian Islands were formed, but otherwise not enough to keep me tuned in past 31%.

Girl, Forgotten, Karin Slaughter. Back to the reliable combination, Karin Slaughter read by Kathleen Early, with a new main character, U.S. Marshall Andrea Oliver. 4* 6226

Pretty Girls, Karin Slaughter read by Kathleen Early. Without doing any checking, I thought this might be another Andrea Oliver book. Nope. This is a book that led me to wonder when does a book about a ring of torture porn (enthusiasts? consumers?) become torture porn itself? Why does this book not get categorized as horror? There was a LOT of detailed description of the most depraved behaviour by men perpetrated on young women. I persevered because I wanted to get to the presumed resolution, which was satisfying. And I did like the sister relationship, and other family relationships, and the description of the effect on the family when one of the members disappears. And Lydia's relationship with Rick and their daughter, Dee. And the usual good writing. "Sweetheart, I know you're an adult, but adults are like vampires. The

older ones are much more powerful." But I would not recommend this to anyone. 1.5* 8226

The Women, Kristin Hannah.

Locked In, Jussi Adler-Olsen. The 10th Department Q novel, in which main character Detective Carl Mørck, framed, spends most of the book in jail with various bad guys trying to kill him. I like reading books written by Europeans, for the different kind of psyche and relationship with the world – see also the two series by Fred Vargas. The Department Q series, starting in 2007, is very enjoyable because of the four main characters in the department, their quirks and their loyalty to each other. This is not the best representative, though, partly because Carl is restricted from communicating with the others so the interactions are halved. It's long and complex, with lots of characters. Many sources identified this as the last book in the series, but all-knowing Amazon is offering pre-orders on an 11th, *No Song for the Dead*, co-written by Adler-Olsen, Stine Bolther, and Line Holm. That will be interesting. Reminds me of David Lagercrantz writing three of the Lisbeth Salander books after Steig Larsson died three books into a planned 8-book series. And then Karin Smirnoff finished off the series with *The Girl in the Eagle's Talons* and *The Girl with Ice in Her Veins*. I'm behind in my reading, which is a shame since Lisbeth Salander is a greatest of all time heroine. 3.5* 19226

I asked the wildflower in my front yard
if it was worried about the severe
thunderstorm predicted to come
tomorrow.

“What’s a ‘tomorrow?’” the flower asked.

I smiled and sat beside her,
my bones creaking like old steps.

“It’s the day when the sky might get
Angry,” I whispered. “Thunder. Wind.
Maybe even some hail.”

She tilted her face toward the sun,
unbothered, unconcerned.

“Oh,” she said, opening her petals wider,
“then I must bloom harder today.”

John Roedel