

December Book Club Notes

Thursday, December 19

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

James

By Percival Everett

Raft the Mississippi River with Huck Finn and his enslaved companion, James, who uses his intelligence to outwit the cruel whites they encounter. James is constantly at risk of capture or death but ultimately heroic in this reimagining of Mark Twain's American classic. The book was named winner of this year's National Book Award for Fiction.

Meet Percival Everett

Percival Leonard Everett II (born December 22, 1956) is an American writer and [Distinguished Professor](#) of English at the [University of Southern California](#). He has described himself as "pathologically ironic" and has played around with numerous genres such as western fiction, mysteries, thrillers, satire and philosophical fiction. His books are often satirical, aimed at exploring race and identity issues in the United States.

He is best known for his novels [Erasure](#) (2001), [I Am Not Sidney Poitier](#) (2009), and [The Trees](#) (2021), which was shortlisted for the 2022 [Booker Prize](#). His 2024 novel [James](#), also a finalist for the [Booker Prize](#), won the [Kirkus Prize](#) and the [National Book Award for Fiction](#).

Erasure was adapted as the film [American Fiction](#) (2023), written and directed by [Cord Jefferson](#), starring [Jeffrey Wright](#), [Sterling K. Brown](#), and [Leslie Uggams](#).

Videos

CBS Sunday Morning Interview

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0s4FRf1QSI&ab_channel=CBSSundayMorning
(6:28)

PBS Books

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZv6zgGuhmg&ab_channel=PBSBooks
(45:36)

Discusses the use of the N Word in *James* and *Huck Finn*-Florida should probably ban *James*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4qSDoMbBcY&ab_channel=CBSSundayMorning
(2:08)

Giving James a Voice: Interview with Walter Isaacson

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zb0szXlvkwU&ab_channel=AmanpourandCompany

(17:50)

Print

BBC Interview

<https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-68762352>

What the Booker Prize Judges said:

‘At its core, the novel examines the dehumanizing effects of slavery and the pervasive, institutionalized racism that underpins it. These themes powerfully resonate with ongoing struggles against systemic oppression and the legacy of slavery in contemporary society.

‘Jim’s use of language and his reclamation of his own identity speaks to the universal need for self-determination in the face of oppression. This struggle for autonomy and agency remains highly relevant in today’s politicized climate on a global scale.’

The Original

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain was first published in 1884 and has been controversial throughout its history—something that’s still true today. **James** is the latest of many literary, film, stage and television adaptations. Here’s Wikipedia’s summary:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adventures_of_Huckleberry_Finn

Coming Up Next

Thursday, January 16

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Educated

By Tara Westover

Brought up by survivalists, Tara Westover did not go to school or see doctors as a child yet managed to end up with a PhD from Cambridge University. *Educated* is an account of her struggle to reinvent herself after a harrowing childhood in rural Idaho. It is a tale of fierce family loyalty and of the grief that comes with severing the closest of ties.

Thursday, February 20

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Brave the Wild River: The Untold Story of Two Women Who Mapped the Botany of the Grand Canyon

By Melissa Sevigny

Travel down the untamed Colorado River in 1938 on a 43-day journey with two women scientists risking life and limb at every rapid. Elzada Clover and Lois Jotter map the botany of the region, collecting and cataloging specimens, as well as doing all the cooking for their group of river runners. Author Melissa Sevigny will appear via Zoom to answer our questions.

Ordinary Grace

By William Kent Krueger

For 13-year-old Frank Drum, the summer of 1961 was a grim time in which death assumed many forms: accident, nature, suicide, murder. Told through his memory 40 years later, this coming-of-age story is a meditation on life and death, relationships, faith and the grace of God. William Kent Krueger brings the small-town setting to life with his descriptions and languid pacing.

Thursday, April 17

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

The Berry Pickers

By Amanda Peters

A four-year-old indigenous girl goes missing from the blueberry fields of Maine, sparking a tragic mystery that haunts the survivors, unravels a community, and remains unsolved for nearly 50 years. The story follows both the child's Mi'kmaq family and the white family which kidnaped her. Author Amanda Peters has both Mi'kmaq and settler ancestry.