

DGC Book Club: Belkin, Lisa. *Genealogy of a Murder: Four Generations, Three Families, One Fateful Night*. Nonfiction. 2024
August 6, 2026 @ 12:30 pm

Brown bag lunch 12:30
Book discussion begins 1:00 Genealogy library

This is the 19th selected book for the DGC Book Club.

Suggested books from our DGC members

Belkin, Lisa. *Genealogy of a Murder: Four Generations, Three Families, One Fateful Night*. **Nonfiction**. 2024

Independence Day weekend, 1960: a young cop is murdered, shocking his close-knit community in Stamford, Connecticut. The killer remains at large, his identity still unknown. But on a beach not far away, a young Army doctor, on vacation from his post at a research lab in a maximum-security prison, faces a chilling realization. He knows who the shooter is. In fact, the man—a prisoner out on parole—had called him only days before. By helping his former charge and trainee, the doctor, a believer in second chances, may have inadvertently helped set the murder into motion. And with that one phone call, may have sealed a policeman's fate.

Alvin Tarlov, David Troy, and Joseph DeSalvo were all born of the Great Depression, all with grandparents who'd left different homelands for the same American Dream. How did one become a doctor, one a cop, and one a convict? In *Genealogy of a Murder*, journalist Lisa Belkin traces the paths of each of these three men—one of them her stepfather. Her canvas is large, spanning the first half of the twentieth century: immigration, the struggles of the working class, prison reform, medical experiments, politics and war, the nature/nurture debate, epigenetics, the infamous Leopold and Loeb case, and the history of motorcycle racing. It is also intimate: a look into the workings of the mind and heart.

Recommended by Mary Dobosz

Evans, Virginia. *The Correspondent*. **Fiction**. 2025.

Filled with knowledge that only comes from a life fully lived, *The Correspondent* is a gem of a novel about the power of finding solace in literature and connection with people we might never meet in person. Sybil Van Antwerp has throughout her life used letters to make sense of the world and her place in it. Most mornings, around half past ten, Sybil sits down to write letters—to her brother, to her best friend, to the president of the university who will not allow her to audit a class she desperately wants to take, to Joan Didion and Larry McMurtry to tell them what she thinks of their latest books, and to one person to whom she writes often yet never sends the letter. Sybil Van Antwerp is adopted, and her son gives her a DNA test, which prompts her to get curious about her ancestry. That adoption/birth-family background also ties into why letter-writing matters so much to her.

Recommended by Suzanne Peterson

Ferrer, Ada. *Keeper of My Kin: Memoir of an Immigrant Daughter*. **Nonfiction**. 2026.

In 1963, four years after Fidel Castro came to power, Ada Ferrer's mother made the agonizing decision to flee Cuba with her infant daughter, Ada, and to leave behind her nine-year-old son, Poly. In this beautiful memoir, Ferrer masterfully shifts between her roles as historian and family member, weaving a multigenerational tale that reaches into the past to understand the circumstances and choices that led to the present. We see key historical events through the eyes of the family: the grandmother who raised Poly after Ada's departure, a Black woman born a year after the end of slavery in Cuba; Ada's parents, forced to invent themselves anew in a foreign land; and two brothers left behind—Poly and another, once-secret brother named Juan José, both of whose lives were marked irrevocably by revolution and family separation. Moving between Cuba and the United States and then back again, the book unpacks the experience and emotion of migration, in the moment of separation and over the long-term, for those who left and those who stayed.

Recommended by Suzanne Peterson

Franklin, Tom. *Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter*. **Fiction**. 2010.

In the 1970s, Larry Ott and Silas Jones were boyhood pals in a small town in rural Mississippi. Their worlds were as different as night and day: Larry was the child of lower-middle-class white parents, and Silas, the son of a poor, black single mother. But then Larry took a girl to a drive-in movie and she was never seen or heard from again. He never confessed . . . and was never charged. More than twenty years have passed. Larry lives a solitary, shunned existence, never able to rise above the whispers of suspicion. Silas has become the town constable. And now another girl has disappeared, forcing two men who once called each other friend to confront a past they've buried for decades. "A ripping good mystery, this novel also has depth and a subtle literary side, as the local area comes to life through the writer's cinematic descriptive phrases and a large and colorful cast of supporting characters. Highly recommended." — *Library Journal* (starred review)

Recommended by Mary Dobosz

Hill, Richard. *Finding Family: My search for roots and the secrets in my DNA*. **Nonfiction**. 2012
Finding Family is the suspenseful account of an adoptee trying to reclaim the biological family denied him by sealed birth records. This fascinating quest, including the author's landmark use of DNA testing, takes readers on an exhilarating roller-coaster ride and concludes with a twist that rivals anything Hollywood has to offer.

Recommended by Mary Dobosz

Ito, Susan Kiyo. *I Would Meet You Anywhere: A Memoir*. **Nonfiction**. 2023

Growing up with adoptive nisei parents, Susan Kiyo Ito knew only that her birth mother was Japanese American and her father white. But finding and meeting her birth mother in her early twenties was only the beginning of her search for answers, history, and identity. Though the two share a physical likeness, an affinity for ice cream, and a relationship that sometimes even feels familial, there is an ever-present tension between them, as a decades-long tug-of-war pits her birth mother's desire for anonymity against Ito's need to know her origins, to see and be seen.

Along the way, Ito grapples with her own reproductive choices, the legacy of the Japanese American incarceration experience during World War II, and the true meaning of family. A *Library Journal* best memoir of 2023 • Finalist, William Saroyan International Prize for Writing Recommended by Cindy Scott

Jerkis, Morgan. *Wandering in Strange Lands, A Daughter of the Great Migration Reclaims her Roots*. **Nonfiction**. 2022

Between 1916 and 1970, six million black Americans left their rural homes in the South for jobs in cities in the North, West, and Midwest in a movement known as The Great Migration. But while this event transformed the complexion of America and provided black people with new economic opportunities, it also disconnected them from their roots, their land, and their sense of identity, argues Morgan Jerkins. In this fascinating and deeply personal exploration, she recreates her ancestors' journeys across America, following the migratory routes they took from Georgia to Louisiana, Oklahoma and California.

Recommended by Suzanne Peterson

Jones, M.K. Maze Investigation Series (6 titles) The Curiosity Club of St. Foy series. (2 titles so far). **Fiction**

M. K. Jones is a family history researcher, genealogist and author of the “Maze Investigations” series and “The Curiosity Club of St. Foy”

Recommended by Michael Bowling

King, Laurie R. *The Lantern's Dance: A Novel of Suspense Featuring Mary Russell and Sherlock Holmes* (Mary Russell Mysteries, Book 18). **Fiction**. 2024

Mary Russell and Sherlock Holmes, hoping for a respite in the French countryside, are instead caught up in a case that turns both bewildering and intensely personal

The secrets of the past appear to be reaching into the present. And it seems increasingly urgent that Russell figure out how a journal and lantern are related to Damian—and possibly to Sherlock Holmes himself. Could there be things about his own history that even the master detective does not perceive?

Recommended by Lisa Henderson

Parthasarathy, Raghuvver. *So Simple a Beginning: How Four Physical Principles Shape Our Living World*. **Nonfiction**. 2022

A biophysicist reveals the hidden unity behind nature's breathtaking complexity - The form and function of a sprinting cheetah are quite unlike those of a rooted tree. A human being is very different from a bacterium or a zebra. The living world is a realm of dazzling variety, yet a shared set of physical principles shapes the forms and behaviors of every creature in it. *So Simple a Beginning* shows how the emerging new science of biophysics is transforming our understanding of life on Earth and enabling potentially lifesaving but controversial technologies such as gene editing, artificial organ growth, and ecosystem engineering.

Recommended by Cyndi Young

Richardson, Kim Michele. *The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek*. **Fiction**. 2019

Cussy Mary Carter is a 19-year-old from Troublesome Creek, Kentucky born with a rare genetic condition causing her skin to be tinged blue. Cussy lives with her widowed father, a coal miner who relentlessly attempts to marry her off. As part of the new governmental program aimed at bringing reading material to isolated rural Kentuckians, Cussy rides a mule over treacherous terrain, delivering books and periodicals to people of limited means. Cussy's patrons refer to her as "Bluet" or "Book Woman," and she delights in bringing them books as well as messages, medicine, and advice. When a local pastor takes a nefarious interest in Cussy, claiming that God has sent him to rid society of her "blue demons," efforts to defend herself leave Cussy at risk of arrest, or worse. The local doctor agrees to protect Cussy in exchange for her submission to medical testing. As Doc finds answers about Cussy's condition, she begins to re-examine what it means to be a Blue and what life after a cure might look like. With a focus on the personal joy and broadened horizons that can result from access to reading material, this well-researched tale serves as a solid history lesson on 1930s Kentucky.

Recommended by Cyndi Young

Robinson, Eugene. *Freedom Lost, Freedom Won: A Personal History of America*. Nonfiction. 2026

Pulitzer Prize-winning former *Washington Post* columnist Eugene Robinson tells our nation's torturous racial history through his own family's story, starting with his great-grandfather's freedom from slavery and threading his way to his own narrative and reaching today's Black Lives Matter movement, asking whether this time will be different.

From his great-great-grandfather's achievement in becoming a "free person of color" before emancipation to his great-grandfather's Reconstruction-era success, from his father's odyssey of the Great Migration to his own coming-of-age during the civil rights movement, Robinson delves into a rich archive of Black narratives, arguing that we still have a long way to go before it is possible to speak of a "post-racial America."

Recommended by Ann Burrows

Books read by the Davis Genealogy Book Club

Hiding the Past, The Lost Ancestor by Nathan Dylan Goodwin-Fiction

The Pirate's Wife: The Remarkable True Story of Sarah Kidd by Daphne Palmer- Nonfiction

Inheritance: A memoir of genealogy, paternity, and love by Dani Shapiro-Nonfiction

Genealogy: a novel by Mae Wood-Fiction

The Lost Family: How DNA Testing is Upending Who We Are by Libby Copeland-Nonfiction

The Rosie Project: a novel by Samson, Graeme. - Fiction

Secret Harvests: A Hidden Story of Separation and the Resilience of a Family Farm-Nonfiction

Three Times Removed by M.K. Jones - Fiction

The Stranger in my Genes: A Memoir by Bill Griffeth -Nonfiction

The Orange Lilies by Nathan Dylan Goodwin-Fiction

The Foundling: the true story of a kidnapping, a family secret...by Paul Fronczak and Alex Tresniowski-Nonfiction

The Widow Spy by Megan Campisi. - Fiction

The Forever Witness: How DNA and Genealogy Solved a Cold Case Double Murder by Edward Humes - Nonfiction

The Baby Thief: The Untold Story of Georgia Tann, the Baby Seller Who Corrupted Adoption. by Barbara Raymond - Nonfiction

All That She Carried: The Journey of Ashley's Sack, a Black Family Keepsake. by Tiya Miles-Nonfiction

The Seven Sisters by Lucinda Riley. - Fiction.

Unnatural Selection: A Memoir of Adoption and Wilderness. by Andrea Ross. - Nonfiction

North Woods: A Novel by Daniel Mason. - Fiction.

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