

Members reviewed books of their own choice & presented their reviews at the 20th January 2025 meeting. Summaries noted below are a small extract.

Book Choice	Author	First pub.	Member's Rating	Review Summary without a spoiler
The Remains of the Day	Kazuo Ishiguro	1989	8.0	Set in 30s England, about Stevens, who is butler & a devoted servant to Lord Darlington. In the 1950s Stevens is still a butler, he goes off to look for Miss Kenton, who had been housekeeper to Lord Darlington. Stevens looks back on his life & reminisces on his wasted life in the service of Lord Darlington, who had been a Nazi sympathiser & anti-Semite.
Brave New World	Aldous Huxley	1932	9.0	Brave New World by Aldous Huxley published in 1932. Set in 2540CE. Futuristic society engineered to produce a perfect world after many wars. Embryos are subjected to change in nutrition and drugs to produce a perfect society. Top grades are intellectual and leaders whilst lower grades carry out menial tasks. Everyone is happy, take drugs, have sex with anyone and are atheists. There are people outside this society and are referred to as Savages. The disturbing concept of this novel is that it could come TRUE!!
The Little Wartime Library	Kate Thompson	2023	9.0	Based on the factual extensive community that was established, during the blitz, in the uncompleted Bethnal Green underground station. This is an engaging and emotional tale of the highs and lows of the people running its underground library, and its users. It's a must reader for lovers of social history.
Night Climbing	Sarah Day	2024	9.0	Inspired by a true event of a group of English schoolboys and their teacher hit by a storm while climbing in the German mountains in 1936. This is story of two women, one English and one German who both want to find out what happened to a boy who went missing on the mountain. The story is set against the sinister rise of Nazism in Germany and facism in England.
Harlequin (The Grail Quest 1)	Bernard Cornwell	2000	8.0	The year is 1342. The English, led by Edward III, are laying waste to the French countryside. The army may be led by the King, but it is the archers, the common men, who are England's secret weapon. The French know them as Harlequins. Thomas of Hookton is one of these archers but he is also on a personal mission: To avenge his father's death and retrieve a stolen relic. Thomas begins a quest that will lead him through fields smeared with the smoke of fires set by the rampaging English, until at last the two armies face each other on a hillside near the village of Crécy. A fun read.
Gabriel's Moon	William Boyd	2024	9.0	The book, a new trilogy, is set in London, Warsaw and Cadiz during the 60s at the time of the Cold War. The main character, Gabriel Dax, has sleepless nights as he is haunted by dreams of the death of his mother in a house fire, when he was 8, for which he believes himself to be responsible. The story weaves fact and fiction as real-life events are intertwined whilst Gabriel's ambition as a journalist and travel writer inadvertently leads him to be drawn into the shadowy world of espionage, duplicity and obsession as he becomes a reluctant spy for MI6. I found the book to be an entertaining thriller laced with humour.
All the Light We Cannot See	Anthony Doerr	2014	10.0	Set during WWII, the story of the parallel lives of an unsighted French girl who listens to clandestine short-wave radio broadcasts and a German orphan fast-tracked by the Nazis for his expertise in electronics.
The Glassmaker	Tracy Chevalier	2024	9.0	A saga spanning almost 6 centuries. Orsola travels through time making beautiful beads to save the family glassmaking business on the Venetian island of Murano. She survives plague, flood, tragedy, love and loss to triumph in the end. Utterly captivating.
Far From the Madding Crowd	Thomas Hardy	1874	11.0	"Far from the Madding Crowd" by Thomas Hardy, a classic 1st published in 1874. I'd read 3 of Hardy's books previously and wasn't a great fan but this was his "break thro' " book and it's easy to see why. Whereas for me many of our contemporary writers on our list seem to struggle creating credible characters you care about, this book gives you 4. The headstrong young woman, the good-hearted farmer, the dashing but no good army sergeant and the misguided gentleman farmer. The book deals with the interplay between them. It also deals with issues of the time, such as the position of women in a man's world and has brilliant descriptions of the Dorset countryside and the rural way of life at the time. Quite rightly a classic.
The President Is Missing	Bill Clinton & James Patterson	2018	7.0	A thriller based on the ever-changing realities of the modern world with the President needing to make tough decisions. Patterson probably wrote most of it, but the added voice of an experienced president shines through. Short & punchy chapters make for ever changing scenarios & what-ifs which help the pace and ease with which this book of 513 pages can be read. A worthwhile read.