

Members reviewed books of their own choice & presented their reviews at the 17th NOVEMBER 2025 meeting. Summaries noted below are a small extract

Ref.	Book Choice	Author	First pub.	Member's Rating	Review Summary without a spoiler
CMcD	Leonard and Hungry Paul	Ronan Hession.	2019	7.0	A different kind of novel about ordinary lives that turn out to be extraordinary. Some profound insights into family life, intergenerational especially. About relationships and honesty. No spoilers, but a family gets ready for a wedding and 2 best friends support each other through ordinary challenges of life. It is on TV at the moment, and a friend advised me to read the book first - so I did. Good descriptive and emotional reflections about life, helping each other, and an older coming of age piece (stay at home sons in their 30s). Recommended - but there's not much plot action!
CR	A Particularly Nasty Case	Adam Kay.	2025	9.0	Adam Kay is a former NHS doctor turned author who has written numerous books about his experiences as a doctor. His first book, This is Going to Hurt was made into a brilliant TV show with Ben Wishaw playing Adam Kay. A Particularly Nasty Case is Adam Kay's first fiction book. It is not surprisingly, set in a run down London hospital. The main character Eitan ("rhymes with spray tan") Rose is a gay, Jewish, consultant rheumatologist with mental health issues. He has a sad backstory and has just returned to work after 4 months off following a breakdown. When a very unpleasant senior doctor dies suddenly Eitan is the only person to suspect foul play and sets out to investigate. What follows is funny, sometimes farcical and also sad. Eitan is a great character and I really enjoyed the book. It comes with a trigger warning that there are scenes of a sexual nature and language the some readers might find offensive!
DH	Poison Garden	LJ Ross	2024	6.0	I've read a few of her books which are set in the North East and centre around DCI Ryan. They are easy reading and ideal for holidays. I was disappointed in this one as in my opinion it was a bit "far fetched". Her characters are likeable and down to earth but good responsible policemen and women. I would still recommend it and her other books if you like detective novels.
GS	Snow	John Banville.	2020	3.0	"Snow" is a murder mystery set in County Wexford, Ireland, in December 1957. The landscape is covered in a blanket of snow, but in fact that is barely relevant to the story line. Overall, this is a deeply disappointing read. The solution to the whodunnit and the motive were fairly obvious, or at least guessable, from an early stage. The most interesting theme is the interplay between the local Protestant and Catholic communities, which unravels following the death of a respected priest. However, the characters are shallow and the writing dull, compared to other books by the same author.
JVG	The Last Templar	Raymond Khoury	2005	8.0	Who is Raymond Khoury? -Well, he specialises in historical novels but also writes screenplays & has contributed to scripts such as Spooks and Waking the Dead on British television. - He's actually Lebanese by nationality but he spent time in Britain and also America when he was a teenager. He speaks with a sort of pseudo-American accent. - The Last Templar came out in 2005 and was actually his debut novel but had been around as a screenplay a few years earlier & prior to Dan Brown's 2003 DaVinci Code with which one might consider it has some similarity. However, its distinctly different with action and a plausible historical thread rather than intricate conspiracies or philosophical debates woven into the narrative of The DVC. - TLT is a fast-paced historical thriller that dives deep into the intriguing world of the Knights Templar balancing between the dramatic end of that order in 1291 and a present day mystery centered around a violent raid at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. -The story unfolds through the eyes of a female Archaeologist and a male FBI agent both pulled into a cross-continental adventure chasing secrets that would shake the foundations of the Catholic Church.
JGr	The Heron's Cry	Ann Cleeves	2021	8.0	The Herons Cry is the latest book in the Two Rivers series. Set in North Devon in a hot summer. Detective Matthew Venn is called out to a rural crime scene at the home of a group of artists, which appears to be an elaborately staged murder. The unlikely victim is Dr Nigel Yeo, who has been fatally stabbed by a shard of glass from a vase, which was made by his daughter, who is a glass blower. Matthew Venn's partner becomes implicated because he is a close friend of Eve, the murder victim's daughter. There is a subsequent murder. There are lots of twists and turns as the plot unfolds, with many lies & lots of local gossip & prejudices. It was an enjoyable book, not too taxing, not too long (under 400 pages) probably a holiday read. I would recommend it.
KP	American Dirt	Jeanine Cummins	2020	9.0	The book was surrounded in controversy when published in 2020 but this doesn't detract from it being a totally gripping suspenseful read, chilling in parts, with relatable characters. Lydia, a middle class Mexican business woman, is forced to flee her home in Acapulco with her young son Luca after the local drug cartel leader kills her husband and all of her remaining family. The story highlights Lydia's determination to keep Luca safe as she decides to attempt to escape by joining the migrant trail to the USA border. They begin their harrowing journey in the knowledge that many migrants never make it to their destination. In this novel the author creates a sense of immediacy in her compelling language and she also conveys the terror of the migrant experience. A good read in my opinion.
EC	Exposure	Helen Dunmore	2016	8.0	A compelling thriller set at the height of the Cold War when suspicions were rife and even an ordinary family could be suspected of spying. A good read.
SW	The Teacher	Freida McFadden	2024	10.0	Freida McFadden's books - whilst some people may not class them as 'literature' they are fast paced gripping thrillers, and despite the fact that she writes several books a year they don't feel 'churned out'. True to form "The Teacher" is a gripping tale set in a US high school, where the previous year there was a scandal involving a student called Addie & her Maths teacher called Art. (or Math as it's an American book !) The book opens with someone burying a body in the woods, but it's not known who either of them are. The story then jumps back 3 months and the chapters are told by either Addie herself or Eve her new Maths teacher, from their own different perspective. This story is cleverly constructed, with short chapters, some good amusing asides, and plenty of twists & turns. Some of which are given as shock revelations, while others are drip fed so that the reader slowly realises what's really going on.
TQ	Slow Horses	Mick Herron	2010	8.0	Mick Herron is a local author in the sense of being born and brought up in Newcastle although now based in Oxford. This is the 1st in a series of books under the same general title which have been televised to great acclaim by Apple TV which I haven't seen. This is a spy story/thriller. The slow horses are spooks/agents of the security forces who have all screwed up in some way so that MI5/whoever has no use for them. Rather than sack them with resulting tribunal claims/publicity etc they have been kept on on full pay etc but doing jobs of mind blowing boredom in dismal offices in the hope that they will get fed up and resign and leave with a full pension. They are n't allowed anywhere near a proper spook job. Their chief is Jackson Lamb who is totally lacking in any behavioral skills including personal hygiene. Out of the blue the slow horses get the whiff of a terrorist plot. Can they prevent this from happening especially when the regular security forces do n't want them anywhere near the case and try to obstruct them? There are plenty of good plot twists on the way and rounded characters. I shall read the next book in the series; recommended if you like thrillers.