

Book Group Titles 2025

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>
Bradley, Kalliane	The Ministry of Time
Fagan, Jenni	Ootlin: a Memoir
Okereke, Chioma	Water Baby
Salam, Anbara	Hazardous Spirits
Walsh, Colin	Kala
Whitaker, Chris	All the Colours of the Dark
Winn, Alice	In Memoriam
Yuzuki, Asako	Butter

*this list is not final, and more titles are being purchased for this financial year

Book Group Synopses 2025

Bradley, Kaliane – The Ministry of Time

In the near future, a disaffected civil servant is offered a job in a new government ministry gathering 'expats' from across history to test the limits of time-travel. Her role is to work as a 'bridge': living with, assisting and monitoring the expat known as '1847' - Commander Graham Gore. As far as history is concerned, Commander Gore died on Sir John Franklin's doomed expedition to the Arctic, so he's a little disoriented to find himself alive and surrounded by outlandish concepts such as 'washing machine', 'Spotify' and 'the collapse of the British Empire'. With an appetite for discovery and a seven-a-day cigarette habit, he soon adjusts; and during a long, sultry summer he and his bridge move from awkwardness to genuine friendship, to something more. But as the true shape of the project that brought them together begins to emerge, they are forced to confront their past choices and imagined futures.

Fagan, Jenni – Ootlin: a Memoir

The government told a story about me before I was born. Jenni Fagan was property of the state before birth. She drew her first breath in care and by the age of seven, she had lived in fourteen different homes and had changed name multiple times. Twenty years after her first attempt to write this powerful memoir, Jenni is finally ready to share her account. 'Ootlin' is a journey through the broken UK care system - it is one of displacement and exclusion, but also of the power of storytelling. It is about the very human act of making meaning from adversity.

Okereke, Chioma – Water Baby

She's the Pearl of Makoko and the world is her oyster. In Makoko, the floating slum off mainland Lagos, Nigeria, nineteen-year-old Baby yearns for an existence where she can escape the future her father has planned for her. With opportunities scarce, Baby jumps at the chance to join a newly launched drone-mapping project, aimed at broadening the visibility of her community. Then a video of her at work goes viral and Baby finds herself with options she could never have imagined - including the possibility of leaving her birthplace to represent Makoko on the world stage. But will life beyond the lagoon be everything she's dreamed of? Or has everything she wants been in front of her all along?

Salam, Anbara – Hazardous Spirits

Edinburgh, 1923. Evelyn Hazard is a young woman living a comfortable and unremarkable middle-class life. One day, her quiet existence is shattered when her steady, reliable

husband Robert makes a startling announcement: he can communicate with the dead. As the couple are pulled into the spiritualist movement that emerged following the mass deaths caused by the First World War and the Spanish Flu, Evelyn's life becomes increasingly unsettled as dark secrets from her past threaten to surface. Faced with the prospect of losing all that is dear to her, Evelyn finds herself asking: is the man she loves a fraud, a madman or - most frighteningly - is he telling the truth?

Walsh, Colin – Kala

In the seaside village of Kinlough, on Ireland's west coast, three old friends meet for the first time in years. They - Helen, Joe and Mush - were part of an original group of six inseparable teenagers in the summer of 2003, with motherless, reckless Kala Lanann at its white-hot centre. But later that year, Kala disappeared without a trace. Now human remains have been discovered in the woods - including a skull with a Polaroid photo tucked inside - and the town is both aghast and titillated at the reopening of such an old wound. On the eve of this gruesome discovery, Helen had reluctantly returned for her father's wedding; the world-famous musician Joe had come home to dry out and reconnect with something authentic; and Mush had never left. But when two more girls go missing, they are forced to confront their own complicity in the events that led to Kala's disappearance.

Whitaker, Chris – All the Colours of the Dark

Late one summer, the town of Monta Clare is shattered by the abduction of local teenager Joseph 'Patch' Macauley. Nobody more so than Saint Brown, who is broken by her best friend's disappearance. Soon, she will eat, sleep, breathe, only to find him. But when she does: it will break her heart. Patch lies in a pitch-black room - all alone - for days or maybe weeks. Until he feels a hand in his. Her name is Grace and, though they cannot see each other, she takes him from the darkness and paints their world with her words. In this hopeless place, they fall in love. But when he escapes: there is no sign she ever even existed. To find her again, Patch charts an epic search across the country. And, to set him free, Saint will shadow his journey: on a darker path to hunt down the man who took them. Even if finding the truth means losing each other forever.

Winn, Alice – In Memoriam

It's 1914, and talk of war feels far away to Henry Gaunt, Sidney Ellwood and the rest of their classmates, safely ensconced in their idyllic boarding school in the English countryside. At seventeen, they're too young to enlist, and anyway, Gaunt is fighting his own private battle - an all-consuming infatuation with his best friend, the dreamy, poetic Ellwood - not having a clue that Ellwood is in love with him, always has been. When Gaunt's German mother asks him to enlist as an officer in the British army to protect the family from anti-German attacks, Gaunt signs up immediately, relieved to escape his overwhelming feelings for Ellwood. The

front is horrific, of course, and though Gaunt tries to dissuade Ellwood from joining him on the battlefield, Ellwood soon rushes to join him, spurred on by his love of Greek heroes and romantic poetry. Before long, their classmates have followed suit.

Yuzuki, Asako – Butter

Gourmet cook Manako Kajii sits in Tokyo Detention Centre convicted of the serial murders of lonely businessmen, who she is said to have seduced with her delicious home cooking. The case has captured the nation's imagination but Kajii refuses to speak with the press, entertaining no visitors. That is, until journalist Rika Machida writes a letter asking for her recipe for beef stew and Kajii can't resist writing back. Rika, the only woman in her news office, works late each night and survives on cheap, convenience store fare, rarely cooking more than ramen. As the visits unfold between her and the steely Kajii, they are closer to a masterclass in food than journalistic research. Rika hopes this gastronomic exchange will help her soften Kajii but it seems that she might be the one changing. With each meal she eats, something is awakening in her body, might she and Kaji have more in common than she once thought?