

# GREAT BOOKS FOR SUMMER READING GROUPS

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Want to put together a summer reading group but don't have time to read lots of options and prepare discussion questions?

**Check this  
out!**

Opportunities to

**affect:**

## Reading Guides 2020-21

To download free discussion guides, visit [www.cbf.net/book-clubs](http://www.cbf.net/book-clubs)



### AUGUST

**Deacon King Kong** by James McBride  
In September 1969, a cranky old church deacon known as Sportcoat shoots a neighborhood drug dealer at point-blank range. *Deacon King Kong* brings to life the people affected by the shooting.



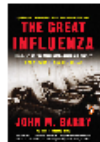
### SEPTEMBER

**A Very Large Expanse of Sea** by Tahereh Mafi  
After 9/11, Shirin is tired of being stereotyped as a result of her race, her religion, and the hijab she wears every day. But then she meets Ocean James, the first person who seems to want to get to know her. (YA)



### OCTOBER

**Miracles and Other Reasonable Things** by Sarah Bessey  
Weaving together theology and memoir in her trademark narrative style, Bessey tells us the story of the moment that changed her body and how it ultimately changed her life. She invites us to a path of knowing God that is filled with ordinary miracles, hope in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, and other completely reasonable things.



### NOVEMBER

**The Great Influenza** by John M. Barry  
*The Great Influenza* tells the story of the 1918 influenza pandemic that broke out in an army camp during World War I and killed up to a 100 million people in a matter of months.



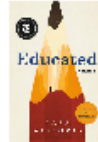
### DECEMBER

**Caste** by Isabel Wilkerson  
Beyond race, class, or other factors, there is a powerful caste system that influences people's lives and behavior and the nation's fate. Isabel Wilkerson provides an eye-opening story of people and history, and a reexamination of what lies under the surface of ordinary lives and of American life today.



### JANUARY

**The Water Dancer** by Ta-Nehisi Coates  
Hiram Walker was born into bondage but was gifted with a mysterious power. Years later, when Hiram almost drowns in a river, that same power saves his life. *The Water Dancer* traces Hiram's escape from the coffin of the Deep South to the idealistic movements in the North.



### FEBRUARY

**Educated** by Tara Westover  
An unforgettable memoir about a young girl who, kept out of school, leaves her survivalist family and goes on to earn a PhD from Cambridge University.



### MARCH

**Little Fires Everywhere** by Celeste Ng  
In Shaker Heights, everything is planned, and no one embodies this spirit more than Elena Richardson, whose guiding principle is playing by the rules. The arrival of Mia Warren and her daughter Pearl upends this carefully ordered community. *Little Fires Everywhere* explores motherhood, the weight of secrets, the nature of art and identity, and the danger of believing that following the rules can avert disaster.



### APRIL

**Exhalation** by Ted Chiang  
This much-anticipated second collection of stories by Ted Chiang is full of revelatory ideas and deeply sympathetic characters. Chiang wrestles with the oldest questions on earth—What is the nature of the universe? What does it mean to be human?—and ones that no one else has even imagined.



### MAY

**Homegoing** by Yaa Gyasi  
Yaa Gyasi's first novel delivers unforgettable characters whose lives were shaped by historical forces beyond their control. Tracing three hundred years in Ghana and America through the lives of two half-sisters, *Homegoing* makes history visceral and captures how the memory of captivity came to be inscribed in the soul of a nation.

[cbf.net/bookclubreadingguides](http://cbf.net/bookclubreadingguides)

50 Book ideas

Opportunities to

**affect:**

February 2021

## In Reading Groups

Book Discussion Guide from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Adapted from *Now Read This* - PBS NewsHour/*New York Times*



### *Educated*

by Tara Westover

An unforgettable memoir about a young girl who, kept out of school, leaves her survivalist family and goes on to earn a PhD from Cambridge University.

- Educated* starts with an epigraph from Virginia Woolf: "The past is beautiful because one never realizes an emotion at the time. It expands later, and thus we don't have complete emotions about the present, only the past." What do you think Woolf meant by this? Why do you think Tara Westover chose to begin her memoir this way?
- In the first pages of *Educated*, we are introduced to the mountain in rural Idaho where the Westover family lives. How does this setting inform the family's experience?
- We are also introduced early in the book to the standoff at Ruby Ridge, a 1992 gunfight between F.B.I. agents and United States marshals and a heavily armed family on an isolated homestead. How does this incident cast a shadow over the Westover parents and children, and the survivalism that characterizes their upbringing?
- In Chapter 5, Westover's brother Tyler announces that he's going to college, something none of her other siblings have done. Why does Westover's father, Gene, object to formalized education? How does Tyler's leaving have an impact on Westover?
- In the Author's Note, Westover cautions that this memoir is not about Mormonism or "any form of religious belief," and that she rejects a negative or positive correlation between believing or not believing and being kind or not being kind. How does her father Gene's faith inform how he sees the world?
- What did you make of Chapter 8, "Tiny Harlots," which moves from Gene's distrust of Westover's dance recital uniform to his pride over her singing in church?
- By Chapter 12, "Fish Eyes," we are introduced to Shawn's abuse of Westover and the other women in his life, which recurs throughout the book. When Westover starts crying over one of these early incidents, she writes that she is crying from the pain, not from Shawn hurting her, and that she sees herself as "unbreakable." She also writes that his abuse not affecting her "was its effect." Why is this insight important?
- By part two of *Educated*, Westover has decided she wants to get an education, has found a way to take the ACT, and has left the mountain to go to college at Brigham Young University, despite her father's objections. In her first class at college, Westover recounts not knowing what the word "holocaust" means. Why is this moment significant?
- Early on, Westover writes about "all the decisions that go into making a life — the choices people make, together and on their own, that combine to produce any single event." What do you think she meant by this? How does this insight apply to your own life?
- Throughout the book, Westover refers back to journals she kept while growing up. Sometimes, she recorded events as they really felt, but many times, she says she presented events as less traumatic than they really were, or used "vague, shadowy language" to obscure how she'd been hurt. How do these journals inform the book?

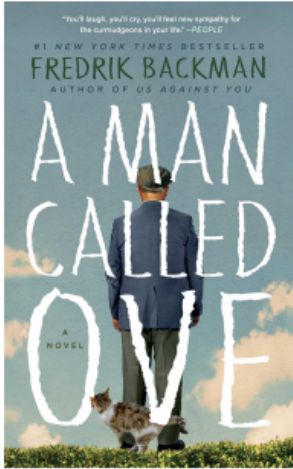


## DECEMBER

### ***Everything Happens for a Reason: And Other Lies I've Loved* by Kate Bowler**

Bowler shares her battle with cancer in an account populated with friends, mega-church preachers, relatives, and doctors. Bowler offers up irreverent, hard-won observations on dying and the ways it has taught her to live.

Download the [free discussion guide for Everything Happens for a Reason](#)

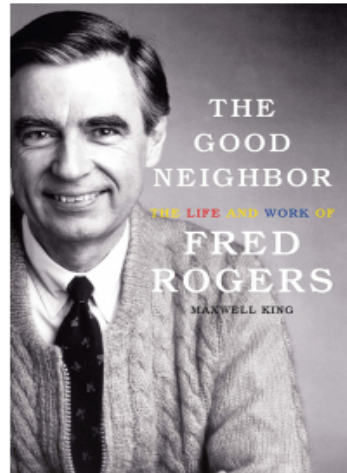


## AUGUST

### ***A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman**

Behind Ove's cranky exterior there is a story and a sadness. The arrival of Ove's new neighbors leads to unexpected friendships that will change Ove and the community.

Download the [free discussion guide for A Man Called Ove](#)

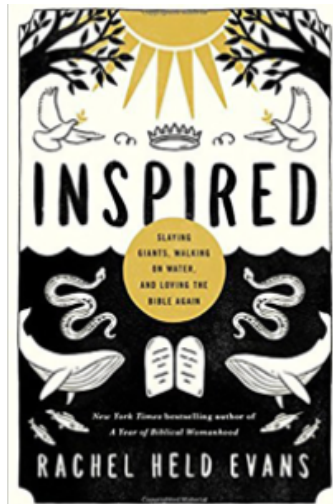


## JANUARY

### ***The Good Neighbor* by Maxwell King**

In the first full-length biography of Fred Rogers, King offers a view of the children's champion that is both a feel-good tribute and a look into Rogers' commitment to making the world a better place.

Download the [free discussion guide for The Good Neighbor](#)



## FEBRUARY

### ***Inspired* by Rachel Held Evans**

Drawing upon recent scholarship and literary analysis, Evans creatively retells our favorite Bible stories and connects them to our present-day ones. Readers are invited to fall in love with Scripture all over again without checking their intellect at the door.

Download the [free discussion guide for Inspired](#)