

Thank you for your interest in the Central NJ Book Club. This document has answers to some questions you may have about the book club.

Why was the club formed?

Most book clubs cater to focus on books that are popular now and haven't yet stood the test of time, or are at inconvenient times that don't fit people's busy lives. This book club is one step in remedying that, by gathering folks with the express purpose of reading books that are not mere escapist page turners but seek to enlighten the reader, and meet at a central location at night when it is more convenient to converse with other like-minded people.

When and where do you meet?

Generally, at 7:30 pm on the first Wednesday of every month, in the basement meeting room of Plainfield Masonic Temple (AKA Jerusalem Lodge #26) at 105 E. Seventh St, Plainfield, NJ 07060. If the time or location changes, we will contact you by email if you are on our email list.

If I didn't read the book, can I still come to the meeting?

Yes, but obviously there will be spoilers!

Do I need to be a Freemason to come?

No, the book club is open to everyone.

How long are the meetings?

Depending on the book, approximately 2-3 hours.

Is there a cost for joining the book club?

No. But you are more than welcome to contribute to the coffee fund or the Historic Preservation of the building!

What is the overall meeting format?

Anticipate 1-2 hours for discussion of the book, followed by time for socializing or further discussion.

Do you have copies of the books being discussed?

No, but they should be readily available at your library, or you can request a hold from another library. Alternatively, they should be available through retailers, electronic reading devices, etc. If the copyright expired, some may be available for free electronically from Project Gutenberg. (<https://www.gutenberg.org/>)

Do I need a particular edition of a book or can I listen to it on audio?

No particular edition is needed. You may want to research which version meets your needs, particularly if the book has been translated from another language. Feel free to use an abridged version if you're pressed for time. (You will also not be criticized if you "only" watched the movie.)

Listening to a book on audio is an excellent way to approach a book, especially for the time-strapped, or if you have a long commute. I've found some books mesh better with me on audio than on paper, so if you're having trouble with a book you might try a different approach to traditionally reading it.

Are there particular books you are avoiding?

Yes, to keep harmony in the club, we will not be reading books that are biased in terms of current political topics, or praising or condemning a certain religious view. For example, we read "A History of God" for Sept. 2025. It is more academic in nature and charts the evolution of God as a concept through Judaism, Christianity and Islam but does not advocate for any of these religions.

Also, books that are either overly simple or complex, or those requiring expertise in a particular field to grasp are avoided. However, unlike other book groups, voluminous books may be read, as noted below.

So what books are you reading in the club?

They *generally* meet these criteria: able to be read within a month, have a solid basis as being one of enriching the reader, are easily obtainable, and not beyond the ability of a commonly educated man to understand. (We're not planning to read PhD. theses.) This encompasses a multitude of books from an array of knowledge from literature to sci-fi to history to philosophy and beyond.

You mentioned reading large books? I can't read War and Peace in a month.

Neither can I. Nevertheless, twice a year we will be stretching ourselves to read large tomes - these might be massive books you always wanted to read but never got around to it. These should be read over multiple months rather than cramming it into one month.

For example, for January 2026's meeting, we covered The Count of Monte Cristo by Alexandre Dumas. As my copy of it is over 1200 pages long, I'd be hard pressed to read it in only one month. But paced over six months, it's just 207 pages a month, a *much* easier task.

You can even set yourself a daily target for the certain number of pages to read of a book – you would be surprised at the progress you will find yourself making.

Who are you and how do I get in touch with you?

My name is Kerr Reno, and I am the moderator of the book club. I was an attorney for 20 years, live in Dunellen with my wife, two kids and dogs, and am currently the Historian & Assistant Secretary at Jerusalem Lodge #26. I have no special literary expertise, and will be counting on you, the members of the club, to bring your own insights; collectively we will be the experts in the books we read.

You can reach me at kreno586@gmail.com or cell at 848-500-2237.

What are the current books?

The initial selections were made by me, but the club is of course open to suggestions. Some selections may integrate with other events going on in the lodge (especially the *Academy of the Humanities* where someone typically delivers a lecture and we have discussion and dinner.) There are typically flyers for selections in the lodge and I regularly post on Facebook regarding upcoming selections.

The recent selections are:

March 11, 2026 - Good Omens by Pratchett & Gaiman

May 13, 2026 - Enchiridion by Epictetus

April 8, 2026 – The Architecture of Happiness by Alain de Botton

June 10, 2026 - Don Quixote by Miguel de Cervantes

How will discussion be moderated?

The moderator will pose a question to the group regarding the book. After some time discussing the question, the moderator will pose another question. Participants should not "soapbox" or "hog the mic", so others may be involved in the discussion. The discussion should be about the book, and if necessary, the moderator will steer the discussion back to the book. There will be time after the book discussion to pursue other topics. If you would like to pose a question about the book to the group for discussion in advance, please email the moderator.

How accessible is the building to wheelchairs, etc.?

As the building is nearly 100 years old as well as a historically designated structure, access is limited. The entrance to the building along Seventh Street has a large step and heavy exterior doors. The elevator only sometimes works and requires frequent repairs. Unless needed, it is **highly recommended** to take the stairs. Over the next few years, the building will be undergoing a major historic preservation which should increase accessibility.

Where do I park?

There is a parking lot directly behind the building along Seventh Street, as well as parking across the street.

I can't make the meeting due to circumstances, what should I do?

No problem, things happen! Send the moderator an email or text.

Are there food and drinks available?

We plan to have light snacks (i.e. cookies) and coffee available; please eat dinner prior to attending.