# NABS Book Club Reading List

Welcome to the NABS Book Club

Here is the list of books we will be reading for the next 7 weeks!

Remember, it is not a requirement to read every book on the list. You can pick the ones that are of interest to you, and read as much or as little as you like. We would love to have you participate in the weekly thematic discussions that correspond to each book.

We meet every Thursday at 8 PM Eastern.

Link to join via the zoom app:

https://zoom.us/j/6143070858

One tap mobile:

+1 6468769923,,6143070858#

## Week 1 – Thursday, April 16: Small great things-Jodi Piccoult

Ruth Jefferson is a labor and delivery nurse at a Connecticut hospital with more than twenty years' experience. During her shift, Ruth begins a routine checkup on a newborn, only to be told a few minutes later that she's been reassigned to another patient. The parents are white supremacists and don't want Ruth, who is African American, to touch their child. The hospital complies with their request, but the next day, the baby goes into cardiac distress while Ruth is alone in the nursery. Does she obey orders or does she intervene?

Ruth hesitates before performing CPR and, as a result, is charged with a serious crime. Kennedy McQuarrie, a white public defender, takes her case but gives unexpected advice: Kennedy insists that mentioning race in the courtroom is not a winning strategy. Conflicted by Kennedy's counsel, Ruth tries to keep life as normal as possible for her family—especially her teenage son—as the case becomes a media sensation. As the trial moves forward, Ruth and Kennedy must gain each other's trust, and come to see that what they've been taught their whole lives about others—and themselves—might be wrong.

With incredible empathy, intelligence, and candor, Jodi Picoult tackles race, privilege, prejudice, justice, and compassion—and doesn't offer easy answers. Small Great Things is a remarkable achievement from a writer at the top of her game.

## Week 2 – Thursday, April 23: The Glass Castle-Jeannette Walls

A tender, moving tale of unconditional love in a family that, despite its profound flaws, gave the author the fiery determination to carve out a successful life on her own terms.

Jeannette Walls grew up with parents whose ideals and stubborn nonconformity were both their curse and their salvation. Rex and Rose Mary Walls had four children. In the beginning, they lived like nomads, moving among Southwest desert towns, camping in the mountains. Rex was a charismatic, brilliant man who, when sober, captured his children's imagination, teaching them physics, geology, and above all, how to embrace life fearlessly. Rose Mary, who painted and wrote and couldn't stand the responsibility of providing for her family, called herself an "excitement addict." Cooking a meal that would be consumed in fifteen minutes had no appeal when she could make a painting that might last forever.

Later, when the money ran out, or the romance of the wandering life faded, the Walls retreated to the dismal West Virginia mining town -- and the family -- Rex Walls had done everything he could to escape. He drank. He stole the grocery money and disappeared for days. As the dysfunction of the family escalated, Jeannette and her brother and sisters had to fend for themselves, supporting one another as they weathered their parents' betrayals and, finally, found the resources and will to leave home.

What is so astonishing about Jeannette Walls is not just that she had the guts and tenacity and intelligence to get out, but that she describes her parents with such deep affection and generosity. Hers is a story of triumph against all odds, but also a tender, moving tale of unconditional love in a family that despite its profound flaws gave her the fiery determination to carve out a successful life on her own terms.

For two decades, Jeannette Walls hid her roots. Now she tells her own story.

## Week 3 – April 30: Little Fires Everywhere-Celeste NG

In Shaker Heights, a placid, progressive suburb of Cleveland, everything is planned--from the layout of the winding roads, to the colors of the houses, to the successful lives its residents will go on to lead. And no one embodies this spirit more than Elena Richardson, whose guiding principle is playing by the rules.

Enter Mia Warren--an enigmatic artist and single mother--who arrives in this idyllic bubble with her teenaged daughter Pearl, and rents a house from the Richardsons. Soon Mia and Pearl become more than tenants: all four Richardson children are drawn to the mother-daughter pair. But Mia carries with her a mysterious past and a disregard for the status quo that threatens to upend this carefully ordered community.

When old family friends of the Richardsons attempt to adopt a Chinese-American baby, a custody battle erupts that dramatically divides the town--and puts Mia and Elena on opposing sides. Suspicious of Mia and her motives, Elena is determined to uncover the secrets in Mia's past. But her obsession will come at unexpected and devastating costs.

Little Fires Everywhere explores the weight of secrets, the nature of art and identity, and the ferocious pull of motherhood--and the danger of believing that following the rules can avert disaster.

## Week 4 – May 7: Lock In-John Scalzi

Not too long from today, a new, highly contagious virus makes its way across the globe. Most who get sick experience nothing worse than flu, fever and headaches. But for the unlucky one percent - and nearly five million souls in the United States alone - the disease causes "Lock In": Victims fully awake and aware, but unable to move or respond to stimulus. The disease affects young, old, rich, poor, people of every color and creed. The world changes to meet the challenge.

A quarter of a century later, in a world shaped by what's now known as "Haden's syndrome," rookie FBI agent Chris Shane is paired with veteran agent Leslie Vann. The two of them are assigned what appears to be a Haden-related murder at the Watergate Hotel, with a suspect who is an "integrator" - someone who can let the locked in borrow their bodies for a time. If the Integrator was carrying a Haden client, then naming the suspect for the murder becomes that much more complicated.

But "complicated" doesn't begin to describe it. As Shane and Vann began to unravel the threads of the murder, it becomes clear that the real mystery - and the real crime - is bigger than anyone could have imagined. The world of the locked in is changing, and with the change comes opportunities that the ambitious will seize at any cost. The investigation that began as a murder case takes Shane and Vann from the halls of corporate power to the virtual spaces of the locked in, and to the very heart of an emerging, surprising new human culture. It's nothing you could have expected.

## Week 5 – May 14: Born a Crime: Stories From a South African Childhood- Trevor Noah

The compelling, inspiring, and comically sublime New York Times bestseller about one man’s coming-of-age, set during the twilight of apartheid and the tumultuous days of freedom that followed.

Trevor Noah’s unlikely path from apartheid South Africa to the desk of The Daily Show began with a criminal act: his birth. Trevor was born to a white Swiss father and a black Xhosa mother at a time when such a union was punishable by five years in prison. Living proof of his parents’ indiscretion, Trevor was kept mostly indoors for the earliest years of his life, bound by the extreme and often absurd measures his mother took to hide him from a government that could, at any moment, steal him away. Finally liberated by the end of South Africa’s tyrannical white rule, Trevor and his mother set forth on a grand adventure, living openly and freely and embracing the opportunities won by a centuries-long struggle.

Born a Crime is the story of a mischievous young boy who grows into a restless young man as he struggles to find himself in a world where he was never supposed to exist. It is also the story of that young man’s relationship with his fearless, rebellious, and fervently religious mother—his teammate, a woman determined to save her son from the cycle of poverty, violence, and abuse that would ultimately threaten her own life.

The eighteen personal essays collected here are by turns hilarious, dramatic, and deeply affecting. Whether subsisting on caterpillars for dinner during hard times, being thrown from a moving car during an attempted kidnapping, or just trying to survive the life-and-death pitfalls of dating in high school, Trevor illuminates his curious world with an incisive wit and unflinching honesty. His stories weave together to form a moving and searingly funny portrait of a boy making his way through a damaged world in a dangerous time, armed only with a keen sense of humor and a mother’s unconventional, unconditional love.

## Week 6 – May 14: Speak-Laurie Halse Anderson

The first ten lies they tell you in high school.

"Speak up for yourself—we want to know what you have to say."

From the first moment of her freshman year at Merryweather High, Melinda knows this is a big fat lie, part of the nonsense of high school. She is friendless, outcast, because she busted an end-of-summer party by calling the cops, so now nobody will talk to her, let alone listen to her. As time passes, she becomes increasingly isolated and practically stops talking altogether. Only her art class offers any solace, and it is through her work on an art project that she is finally able to face what really happened at that terrible party: she was raped by an upperclassman, a guy who still attends Merryweather and is still a threat to her. Her healing process has just begun when she has another violent encounter with him. But this time Melinda fights back, refuses to be silent, and thereby achieves a measure of vindication.

In Laurie Halse Anderson's powerful novel, an utterly believable heroine with a bitterly ironic voice delivers a blow to the hypocritical world of high school. She speaks for many a disenfranchised teenager while demonstrating the importance of speaking up for oneself.

## Week 7 – May 21: Haben : The Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law-Haben Girma

The incredible life story of Haben Girma, the first deafblind graduate of Harvard Law School, and her amazing journey from isolation to the world stage.

Haben grew up spending summers with her family in the enchanting Eritrean city of Asmara. There, she discovered courage as she faced off against a bull she couldn't see, and found in herself an abiding strength as she absorbed her parents' harrowing experiences during Eritrea's thirty-year war with Ethiopia. Their refugee story inspired her to embark on a quest for knowledge, traveling the world in search of the secret to belonging. She explored numerous fascinating places, including Mali, where she helped build a school under the scorching Saharan sun. Her many adventures over the years range from the hair-raising to the hilarious.

Haben defines disability as an opportunity for innovation. She learned non-visual techniques for everything from dancing salsa to handling an electric saw. She developed a text-to-braille communication system that created an exciting new way to connect with people. Haben pioneered her way through obstacles, graduated from Harvard Law, and now uses her talents to advocate for people with disabilities.

HABEN takes readers through a thrilling game of blind hide-and-seek in Louisiana, a treacherous climb up an iceberg in Alaska, and a magical moment with President Obama at The White House. Warm, funny, thoughtful, and uplifting, this captivating memoir is a testament to one woman's determination to find the keys to connection.