

Who Are the Book Browsers?

The Book Browsers book club began its existence early in the life of the Villa Park Women's League. An entry in the Villa Voice newsletter of **December 1975** mentions: *...we [the book club] will be meeting at 9:30 a.m....* There is also mention of a *Book Browsers* group in the **1976-1977 VPWL Roster of Membership**.

Fast-forward to 2023 and we still meet at 9:30 a.m. on the 3rd Wednesday of the month. We start the meeting with 30 minutes of socializing over coffee at a member's home (the **Hostess**). Another member (the **Co-hostess**) brings a savory and a sweet dish to share. However, the real reason we are together is the "brain food" that the book discussion provides under the guidance of that month's **Discussion Leader**. Not everybody has to participate in the discussion—or even read that month's book selection—but the exchange of ideas, the shared insights, and the transfer of knowledge are all priceless.



How Do We Select the Books?

The Browsers' "year" covers the months of September through June—skipping December. During this "year," we circulate a Wish List, where members jot down the titles of books that may be worth reading. We also reach out to the Villa Park Library for suggestions. As we get close to June, the Wish List typically has 30 to 40 titles. A group of Browser volunteers is assembled and becomes the **Selection Committee** whose mission is to research all the books on the Wish List and rank them. The Committee meets and the nine books with the most votes get selected for the next "year"—keeping in mind a balance between fiction, non-fiction, history, classics, etc. The end product is the **Browsers' Schedule**, which gets distributed to our members and is regularly updated.

When Life Gives You Lemons...

On March 15, 2020, shortly before the Book Browsers were about to meet, the VPWL cancelled all in-person activities. Many libraries closed. We now had to find out a way to meet that would satisfy the pandemic guidelines. The Browsers are no strangers to innovation, having readily adopted digital books as well as audiobooks that can be downloaded to our phone—which we can listen to while walking the dog or gardening—so switching to a “virtual” meeting via Zoom was relatively easy.



By April 2020 we were back on schedule and even made up for the lost March meeting by beginning our 2020-2021 year one month early. In October 2020 we met at Irvine Lake wearing masks and distancing. We hoped for more outdoor meetings, but the weather intervened, so we were back on Zoom until we completed the 2020/2021 Schedule. As we began the 2021-2022 year on September 15, 2021 we returned to in-person events.

If you would like to participate in one of our meetings, consider yourself invited! I will gladly email you our Schedule, which includes the meeting's Hostess name and the title of the book we will be discussing (again, you do not have to read the book to join in the conversation). You can then contact the Hostess (phone numbers and email addresses are in the VPWL Roster) to let her know that you will be attending or you can reach me at ewdownsouth@gmail.com or by phone or text at 949-351-3817 to let me know you are attending or to answer any questions you may have about Book Browsers.

Hope to see you there!

Eva Wyszowski-Hartman, Book Browsers' Leader