

Benefits of Book Club

By Heidi Schiller.

Here at the North Vancouver City Library, our Drop-in Book Club is entering its fourth year. The model works well because there are no membership limits and no need for customers to RSVP or register. They love this flexibility. They also get to meet new people every time in addition to connecting with friends and acquaintances already made.

During these past four years, I have become convinced that joining a library book club is a fabulous idea, but sometime customers are wary. Here is what I tell them (aka Five Reasons to Join a Library Book Club).

1. You will read more because you will make time to read.

Many people complain that they don't have enough time to read for pleasure. One solution is to keep yourself accountable for reading, and there is nothing like an impending book club meeting to force you to quit making excuses and make time to read.

2. You will read books you normally wouldn't.

It is one of the things people love and hate about book clubs. You end up reading things you would normally never dream of reading. Sometimes this is awesome and exposes you to new, challenging material that you absolute love and feel so grateful for having been forced to read. Other times, you want to call out whoever suggested the selection because you hate it so much. Both are part of being in a book club. You will read fiction, nonfiction, short stories, graphic novels, and sometimes even young adult or kids' books. Some of my favourite books have been ones I read for a book club that I never would have picked up on my own. (For example: *Just Kids*, by Patti Smith and *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, by Anne Fadiman).

3. You will meet people you normally wouldn't.

Especially in a library book club, or in one that is not organized by your friends. Very few people in the

NVCL Book Club knew each other before coming to meetings. But now, friendships have been struck, connections have been made, book exchanges have occurred and local knowledge has been shared. You might not love everyone you meet, but you will make some friends, and it never hurts to learn how to deal with those whose personalities clash with your own.

4. You will feel more connected to your community.

As a result of number three, you will start to feel like you are more connected to your community. You will learn about events, restaurants, and resources in the community that you wouldn't have otherwise. You will run into your new book club acquaintances around town. You may join other community groups, which will then increase all of these connections exponentially.

5. You will have opportunities to learn new skills, like communication and facilitation.

You will have to learn how to communicate your ideas, feelings and opinions about the book effectively, as well as learn how to listen to others and respect their opinions. Even if this is something you already do, you can never practice effective communication enough. Additionally, you will have opportunities to facilitate conversations, which is a great skill to learn and hone. In the NVCL book club meetings, we always break into small groups of five-to-seven people, and I ask one person to volunteer to facilitate the discussion. I notice that as time goes by, the people who facilitate get better and better at it, and it seems to build their confidence.

If you want to swap stories about running a library book club, or have any questions, please feel free to email me at hschiller@cnv.org.

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North Vancouver City Library.*